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Carnicle '12 and Myhal '14 recognized at the 2011 American Indians in Science and Engineering Society National Conference

Summary: Both students presented on an undergraduate research opportunity.

(December 2, 2011)-University of Minnesota, Morris students Melissa Carnicle, Garretson, South Dakota, and Alexandra Myhal, Parma Heights, Ohio, were recognized at the 2011 American Indians in Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference in November. Carnicle received first place honors in the poster presentation category, and Myhal received second place honors in the oral presentation category.

Melissa Carnicle '12, chemistry, geology, environmental science

Carnicle presented on a Research Experiences in Solid Earth Sciences for Students (RESESS) project conducted through a 2011 undergraduate summer internship program dedicated to increasing diversity in the geosciences, based in Boulder, Colorado. Her RESESS work focused on the aftermath of a 2010 wildfire in Fourmile Canyon that burned 6,181 square acres. To minimize the risk of flash floods in the canyon, the county covered the scorched hillsides with straw in an effort to decrease soil erosion. Working with John Moody, hydrologist, Carnicle studied the hydrologic effect of the straw.

“One of my favorite things about this project is how interdisciplinary it is,” says Carnicle. “I studied the hydrology of the area and also the geology and ecology of the area.”

Alexandra Myhal '14, biology

Myhal presented research conducted at Iowa State University's Biomedical Science Division of the College of Veterinary Medicine through the 2011 summer George Washington Carver Internship Program. With mentor Ravindra Singh, associate professor and Endowed Salsbury Chair in Veterinary Medicine, Myhal studied the molecular basis of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a group of inherited diseases that cause progressive muscle degeneration and weakness, often leading to death, especially in childhood onset. The research involved determining the relative abundance of several spliced isoforms of the survival motor neuron gene. In particular, they studied a unique regulatory element in hopes that it could be used as a therapeutic target for SMA.

Myhal was honored to work on this project that may lead to advances in the treatment of SMA. “Now, we can only treat the symptoms of SMA,” says Myhal. “There is no cure.”

A national organization, AISES is dedicated to increasing the number of American Indian representatives in the physical sciences. The Morris AISES chapter, established only three years ago, continues to grow in membership and in providing opportunities for Morris students. Joe Alia, associate professor of chemistry, serves as the academic adviser.

Photo below from left: Alexandra Myhal and Melissa Carnicle

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